MabinogiCon

26-28 July 1991 Unicon 12

Neuadd Rathbone, UCNW Bangor

MabinogiCon is Unicon 12, the latest in the ongoing series of university and college sf conventions. In 1991 the Unicon will be coming to Bangor, North Wales, the land of sun, sea, sand, surf and sheep.

Our guests will include Anne McCaffrey, author of the Pern books among many others, and consequently an expert on dragons--dragons being, of course, the national symbol of Wales. Anne is also famous for her musical interests, and they will also play a major part in our programme. We are awaiting confirmations from other guests, but certainly hope to have one or two local authors coming along. (Yes, there is science fiction out here in the wastelands. Not much, we'll admit, but what there is will be rooted out and invited.)

Being located up here in the heart of the Welsh-speaking part of the country, our programme themes will be characteristically Welsh. We've already mentioned dragons, and they're only one of a number of ideas and symbols from Celtic myth that have been borrowed and absorbed into the mainstream of science fiction and fantasy. We'll be exploring how these have been used and abused, and wondering whether anyone is ever going to do anything new with them. The other thing for which Wales is renowned--apart from leeks and sheep, which we fear might not support programming strands of their own--is song. (We were going to call ourselves Sciffisteddfod only we couldn't spell it.) So we'll be looking at music in sf and sf in music, from classical to folk to rock. And if you're expecting us to perform a musical, well... er... how did you know?

These two themes aren't exhaustive, of course: we'll be having all the items you expect from a Unicon, such as the food tasting, the turkey readings, the "instant tradition" cocktail workshop, the auction and undoubtedly the odd silly game. (Plans to show SuperTed in the original Welsh have now advanced to the stage of standing around shiftily in Woolies asking whether we can afford to buy a copy yet.)

The convention will be taking place in Neuadd Rathbone, one of the college's halls of residence, overlooking the city of Bangor and with views down the coast of Wales as far as Llandudno. Although Bangor is a small city--only 17000 people--it is one of the major centres of the area, and is therefore well-served for shops, fast-food places and so on. It's also easy to get to, being on the main train line from London Euston to Holyhead (journey time around four hours), the coach route from Birmingham, and on North Wales' two major routes, the A55 coast route (which is horribly scenic) and the A5 across Snowdonia (which is almost frighteningly scenic). If--as seems almost unthinkable--you should find yourself with a few slack hours at the convention, the mountains of Snowdonia, the Menai Bridge and other landmarks and tourist attractions are only a few minutes' drive away. (Portmeirion, the 'Village' of The Prisoner, is less than an hour's drive: just turn left at Caernarfon.) If you don't find yourself with enough free time, it's arguably worth staying around for an extra day just to do the tourist bit.

The committee for this extravaganza are Mark Bailey, Nickey Barnard, Dave Baynham, Cath Bircher, Nigel Evans, Geoff (Jafo) Hale, Stewart Johnson and Ivan Towlson. You'll see us around at most major conventions over the next year or so, or if you don't, write to us at 9 Friars Avenue, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1BB. Or if you have access to JANET e-mail, drop a line to `eeu621@uk.ac.bangor.vaxa`.